San Francisco's New Air Terminal

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SAN FRANCISCO has always been on the threshold to somewhere.

Now it beckons to the world with a facility that is part of a program designed to carry it into a new era of commercial aviation.

And the city isn't sure what awaits in this fast approaching future.

Nor does it know what horizons will lure the passengers who will depart from the new $14,000,000 South Terminal which opens for business on Monday, September 16.

There is precious little time for it, but the men plotting the airport's future have been grabbing moments to plan the city's pioneering program for an industry that moves at a breathless pace.

Did San Franciscans realize just a year ago that its airport technicians would soon be soliciting orbiting satellites for weather information?

Perhaps not.

Aware that tomorrow's travelers will also be grabbing moments to compete for business and pleasure in the space age, planners have sought to design ease and convenience into the San Francisco point of departure and arrival—elements that characterize flight itself.

From these efforts has come a master plan for a terminal complex with a pacemaking theme to launch and receive travelers with a minimum of pre-flight preparation and detailed arranging.

With the concept of compactness and convenience rapidly crystallizing in a uniquely concentrated terminal area development, San Francisco finds no cause for fear in the fact that it is reversing the pattern of other major world airports. Only three U. S. cities exceed its passenger traffic; only four exceed it internationally.

Once through the portals of a new multi-level $10,000,000 garage—now under construction—the traveler will have left the out-of-doors until he reaches his destination in one of the earth's four corners.

From the garage a short walk will take him into either the new South Terminal or the modernized Central Terminal, the structure that gave international status to San Francisco's airport.

Not quite 10 years old—during which period passenger traffic more than doubled—the Central Terminal is getting a $5,000,000 "new era" transformation.

Twelve million persons will use the two terminals each year with less confusion and more convenience than 6,000,000 have experienced in the Central Terminal.

New $14,000,000 South Terminal at San Francisco International Airport will open for business in September.

And soon a third, the North Terminal, will be on the drawing boards. Two more phases of the garage will bring its accommodations from the first phase of 2750—which alone will make it the world's largest—to an ultimate maximum of 8000 automobiles.

The keystone element is the character of service which has been designed into the entire development. The paramount objective is convenience for people who want to fly.

To accomplish this objective San Francisco has relied on imagination and experience—the tools that have brought it to a golden position in a restless and impatient age.

San Franciscans, once their fledgling airport got on its post-war feet, have never been content to merely "keep up" with the best in aviation development.

They have never tied the hands of their inventive craftsmen, who are now convinced that San Francisco has a sixth-sense awareness of flight's limitless possibilities.

Predictions of big things in the future and faith were the ingredients spelling success for the first major bond issue in 1945, when voters authorized $20,000,000 for airport development.

Trust was growing in 1949 when they added another $10,000,000.

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With confidence, the electorate subscribed to $25,000,000 in 1956.

The 1962 bond issue for $9,800,000 to start the airport garage posted one of the biggest electoral bond victories in San Francisco history.

While the city has been spending the $64,800,000 in bond money, its airport tenants have been investing another $40,000,000.

Taxpayer confidence has not been misplaced. San Francisco International Airport was a self-sustaining operation when its management began talking of the new South Terminal.

Before ground was broken on the $14,000,000 project, the people were told its revenues would pay off the bonds and finance its operation—for aviation tenants had agreed to occupy more than 80 per cent of its space.

Now, as it opens for service, its occupancy is 100 per cent.

Maximum development is an infinite, actually non-existent, commodity in the aviation world.

With more than $100,000,000 invested in the airport, those responsible for its management still talk in terms like . . . "if we are to keep pace with the growth of the air industry" . . . "additional areas will be needed" . . . "the Master Plan calls for" . . .

The same men who have successfully given the city achievements in stages can foresee the need for another $100,000,000 to meet the challenges of the future.

One dramatic project their guidelines call for is an "Air Cargo City"—an area where special industrial plants will be constructed for processing and manufacturing materials for trans-shipment by air.

Air freight and express volumes mushroomed by more than 191 per cent since the Central Terminal opened in 1954. Airmail has doubled.

With two 1959 vintage air cargo buildings bulging at the seams, air freight and express is now running about 160,000,000 pounds yearly; and air mail, 55,000,000 pounds.

San Mateo County, in which the airport is located, is graphic proof that San Francisco, the city, is also an area. For the growth of San Mateo County parallels that of the airport, the largest contributor to its economy.

In like manner, economic benefits stemming from the airport's phenomenal growth have been a key factor throughout the burgeoning Bay Area.

The airport, grown from its original 150 acres, now consists of 5171 acres with an aviation complex that is a city unto itself.

The airport that fought hard for its first tenant—and still fights hard for its next!—now serves 18 air lines whose schedules connect the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California with the rest of the world.

There is enough time, as the airport opens a "new era" for commercial aviation in Northern California, for a round of thanks — to air carriers who came, to taxpayers who gave, to builders who shouldered their responsibilities well, and to the public confidence in aviation's ability to meet its challenges.

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